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Little Journeys
TO THE HOMES OF EMINENT ARTISTS

BEL-LINI

Vol. XI. SEPTEMBER, 1903. No. 3

By ELBERT HUBBARD



Single Copies, 25 cents

By the Year, $3.00

LITTLE JOURNEYS
TO THE HOMES OF
Eminent Artists
SERIES OF MCMII

The subjects will be in the following order:

1 RAPHAEL	7 COROT
2 LEONARDO	8 CORREGGIO
3 BOTTICELLI	9 GIAN BELLINI
4 THORWALDSEN	10 CELLINI
5 GAINSBOROUGH	11 ABBEY
6 VELASQUEZ	12 WHISTLER

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Bellini

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LITTLE JOURNEYS

To the Homes of

EMINENT ARTISTS

Bellini

Written by Elbert Hubbard and done into a Book by the Roycrofters at their Shop, which is in East Aurora, New York, A. D. 1902

BELLINI

And if in our day Raphael must give way to Botticelli, with how much greater reason should Titian in the heights of his art, with all his earthly splendor and voluptuous glow, give place to the lovely imagination of dear old Gian Bellini, the father of Venetian Art?

MRS. OLIPHANT,
In "The Makers of Venice."



IT is a great thing to teach. I am never more complimented than when someone addresses me as "teacher." To give yourself in a way that will inspire others to think, to do, to become—what nobler ambition! To be a good teacher demands a high degree of altruism, for one must be willing to sink self, to die—as it were—that others may live. There is something in it very much akin to motherhood—a brooding quality. Every true mother realizes at times that her children are only loaned to her—sent from God—and the attributes of her body and mind are being used by some Power for a Purpose. The thought tends to refine the heart of its dross, obliterate pride and make her feel the sacredness of her office. All good men everywhere recognize the holiness of motherhood—this miracle by which the race survives. ¶ There is a touch of pathos in the thought that while lovers live to make themselves necessary to each other, the mother is working to make herself unnecessary to her children. The true mother is training her children to do without her. And the entire object of teaching is to enable the scholar to do

without his teacher. Graduation should take place at the vanishing point of the teacher.

Yes, the efficient teacher has in him much of this mother-quality. Thoreau, you remember, said that genius is essentially feminine; if he had teachers in mind his remark was certainly true. The men of much motive power are not the best teachers—the arbitrary and imperative type that would bend all minds to match its own may build bridges, tunnel mountains, discover continents and capture cities, but it cannot teach. In the presence of such a towering personality freedom dies, spontaneity droops, and thought slinks away into a corner. The brooding quality, the patience that endures, and the yearning of motherhood, are all absent. The man is a commander, not a teacher; and there yet remains a grave doubt whether the warrior and ruler have not used their influence more to make this world a place of the skull, than the abode of happiness and prosperity. The orders to kill all the first-born, and those over ten years of age, were not given by teachers.

The teacher is one who makes two ideas grow where there was only one before.

Just here, before we pass on to other themes, seems a good place to say that we live in a very stupid old world, round like an orange and slightly flattened at the polls. The proof of this seemingly pessimistic remark, made by a hopeful and cheerful man, lies in the fact that we place small premium in either honor

or money on the business of teaching. As in the olden times, barbers and scullions ranked with musicians, and the Master of the Hounds wore a bigger medal than the Poet-Laureate, so do we pay our teachers the same as coachmen and coal-heavers, giving them a plentiful lack of everything but overwork.

I will never be quite willing to admit that this country is enlightened until we cease the inane and parsimonious policy of trying to drive all the really strong men and women out of the teaching profession by putting them on the pay-roll at one-half the rate, or less, than what the same brains and energy can command elsewhere. In this year of our Lord, 1902, in a time of peace, we have appropriated four hundred million dollars for war and war appliances, and this sum is just double the cost of the entire public school system in America. It is not the necessity of economy that dictates our actions in this matter of education—we simply are not enlightened.

But this thing cannot always last—I look for the time when we shall set apart the best and noblest men and women of earth for teachers, and their compensation will be so adequate that they will be free to give themselves for the benefit of the race, without apprehension of a yawning almshouse. A liberal policy will be for our own good, just as a matter of cold expediency; it will be Enlightened Self-Interest.



ITH the rise of the Bellinis, Venetian art ceased to be provincial, blossoming out into national. Jacopo Bellini was a teacher—mild, gentle, sympathetic, animated. His work reveals personality, but is somewhat stiff and statuesque: sharp in outline like an antique stained glass window. This is because his art was descended from the glass workers; and he himself continued to make designs for the glass workers of Murano all his life. Considering the time in which he lived he was a great painter, for he improved upon what had gone before & prepared the way for those greater than he who were yet to come. He called himself an experimenter, and around him there clustered a goodly group of young men who were treated by him more as comrades than as students. They were all boys together—learners, with the added dignity which an older head of the right sort can lend. ¶ "Old Jacopo" they used to call him, and there was a touch of affection in the term to which several of them have testified. All of the pupils loved the old man, who was n't so very old in years, and certainly was not in heart. Among his pupils were his two sons, Gentile and Gian, and they called him Old Jacopo, too. I rather like this—it proves for one thing that the boys were not afraid of their father. They surely did not run and hide when they heard him coming, neither

did they find it necessary to tell lies in order to defend themselves. A severe parent is sure to have untruthful children, and perhaps the best recipe for having noble children is to be a noble parent.

It is well to be a companion to your children, and just where the idea came in which developed into the English boarding-school delusion, that children should be sent away among hirelings—separated from their parents—in order to be educated, I do not know. It surely was not complimentary to the parents. Old Jacopo did n't try very hard to discipline his boys—he loved them, which is better if you are forced to make choice. They worked together and grew together. Before Gian and Gentile were eighteen they could paint as well as their father. When they were twenty they excelled him, and no one was more elated over it than Old Jacopo. They were doing things he could never do: overcoming obstacles he could not overcome — he clapped his hands in gladness, did this old teacher, and shed tears of joy—his pupils were surpassing him! Gian and Gentile would not admit this, but still they kept right on, each vieing with the other. Vasari says that Gian was the better artist, but Aldus refers to Gentile as "the undisputed master of painting in all Venetia." Ruskin compromises by explaining that Gentile had the broader and deeper nature, but that Gian was more feminine, more poetic, nearer lyric, possessing a delicacy and insight that his brother never acquired. These qualities better fitted him for a teacher

and when Old Jacopo passed away, Gian drifted into his place, for every man is gravitating straight to where he belongs.

The little workshop of one room now was enlarged: the bottega became an atelier. There were groups of workrooms and studios, and a small gallery that became the meeting place for various literary and artistic visitors at Venice. Ludovico Ariosto, greatest of Italian poets, came here and wrote a sonnet to "Gian Bellini, sublime artist, performer of great things, but best of all the loving Teacher of Men."

Gian Bellini had two pupils whose name and fame are deathless: Giorgione and Titian. There is a fine flavor of romance surrounds Giorgione, the gentle, the refined, the beloved. His was a spirit like unto that of Chopin or Shelley, and his death dirge should have been written by the one and set to music by the other —brothers doloroso, sent into this rough world unprepared for its buffets, passing away in manhood's morning. Yet all heard the song of the skylark. Giorgione died broken-hearted, through his lady love's inconstancy. He was exactly the same age as Titian, and while he lived surpassed that giant far, as the giant himself admitted. He died aged thirty-three, the age at which a full dozen of the greatest men of the world have died, and the age at which several other very great men have been born again—which possibly is the same thing. Titian lived to be a hundred, lacking six months, and when past seventy used to give alms

to a beggar-woman at a church door—the woman who had broken the heart of Giorgione. He also painted her portrait—this in sad and subdued remembrance of the days agone.

The Venetian School of Art has been divided by Ruskin into three parts: the first begins with Jacopo Bellini, and this part might be referred to as the budding period. The second is the flowering period, and the palm is carried by Gian Bellini. The period of ripe fruit —o'er-ripe fruit, touched by the tint of death—is represented by four men: Giorgione, Titian, Tintoretto and Paul Veronese. Beyond these four, Venetian Art has never gone, and although four hundred years have elapsed since they laughed and sang, enjoyed and worked, all we can do is to wonder and admire. We can imitate, but we cannot improve.

Gian Bellini lived to be ninety-two, working to the last, always a learner, always a teacher. His best work was done after his eightieth year. The cast-off shell of this great spirit was placed in the tomb with that of his brother Gentile, who had passed out but a few years before. Death did not divide them.



IOVANNI BELLINI was his name. Yet when people who loved beautiful pictures spoke of "Gian," every one knew who was meant, but to those who worked at art he was "The Master." He was two inches under six feet in height, strong and muscular. In spite of his seventy summers his carriage was erect and there was a jaunty suppleness about his gait that made him seem much younger. In fact no one would have believed that he had lived over his three score and ten were it not for the iron gray hair that fluffed out all around under the close fitting black cap, and the bronzed complexion—sun-kissed by wind and weather—which formed a trinity of opposites that made people turn and stare.

Queer stories used to be told about him. He was a skillful gondolier, and it was the daily row back and forth from the Lido that gave him that face of bronze. Folks said he ate no meat and drank no wine, and that his food was simply ripe figs in the season, with coarse rye bread and nuts. Then there was that funny old hunchback, a hundred years old at least, and stone deaf, who took care of the gondola, spending the whole day, waiting for his master, washing the trim, graceful blue-black boat, arranging the awning with the white cords and tassels, and polishing the little brass lions at the sides. People tried to question the old

hunchback, but he gave no secrets away. The master always stood up behind and rowed, while down on the cushions, rode the hunchback, the guest of honor.

There stood the master erect, plying the oar, his long black robe tucked up under the dark blue sash that exactly matched the color of the gondola. The man's motto might have been, "Ich Dien," or that passage of scripture, "He that is greatest among you shall be your servant." Suspended around his neck by a slender chain was a bronze medal, presented by vote of the Signoria when the great picture of "The Transfiguration" was unveiled. If this medal had been a crucifix, and you had met the wearer in San Marco, one glance at the finely chiseled features, the black cap and the flowing robe and you would have said at once the man was a priest, Vicar General of some important diocese. But seeing him standing erect on the stern of a gondola, the wind caressing the dark gray hair, you would have been perplexed until your gondolier explained in serious undertone that you had just passed "The greatest Painter in all Venice, Gian, the Master."

Then if you showed curiosity and wanted to know further, your gondolier would have told you more about this strange man.

The canals of Venice are the highways, and the gondoliers are like 'bus drivers in Piccadilly—they know everybody and are in close touch with all the Secrets of State. When you get to the Gindecca and tie up for

lunch, over a bottle of chianti, your gondolier will tell you this:

The hunchback there in the gondola, rowed by the Master, is the devil who has taken that form just to be with and guard the greatest artist the world has ever seen. Yes, Signor, that clean-faced man with his frank, wide open, brown eyes is in league with the Evil One. He is the man who took young Tiziano from Cadore into his shop, right out of a glass factory, and made him a great artist, getting him commissions and introducing him everywhere! And how about the divine Giorgione who called him father? Oho!

And who is Giorgione? The son of some unknown peasant woman. And if Bellini wanted to adopt him, treat him as his son indeed, kissing him on the cheek when he came back just from a day's visit to Mestre, whose business was it! Oho!

Beside that, his name is n't Giorgione—it is Giorgio Barbarelli. And did n't this Giorgio Barbarelli, and Tiziano from Cadore, and Espero Carbonne, and that Gustavo from Nuremberg, and the others paint most of Gian's pictures? Surely they did. The old man simply washes in the backgrounds and the boys do the work. About all old Gian does is to sign the picture, sell it and pocket the proceeds. Carpaccio helps him, too,—Carpaccio, who painted the loveliest little angel sitting cross-legged playing the biggest mandolin you ever saw in your life.

That is genius, you know, the ability to get some one

else to do the work, and then capture the ducats and the honors for yourself. Of course Gian knows how to lure the boys on—something has to be done in order to hold them. Gian buys a picture from them now and then; his studio is full of their work—better than he can do. Oh, he knows a good thing when he sees it. These pictures will be valuable some day, and he gets them at his own price. It was Antonello of Messina who introduced oil painting in Venice. Before that they mixed their paints with water, milk or wine. But when Antonello came along with his dark, lustrous pictures, he set all artistic Venice astir. Gian Bellini discovered the secret, they say, by feigning to be a gentleman and going to the newcomer and sitting for his picture. He it was who discovered that Antonello mixed his colors with oil. Oho!

¶ Of course not all of the pictures in his studio are painted by the boys—some are painted by that old Dutchman what-'s-his-name—oh, yes, Durer, Alberto Durer of Nuremberg. Two Nuremberg painters were in that very gondola last week just where you sit—they are here in Venice now, taking lessons from Gian, they said. Gian was up there to Nuremberg and lived a month with Durer—they worked together, drank beer together, I suppose, and caroused. Gian is very strict about what he does in Venice, but you can never tell what a man will do when he is away from home. The Germans are a roystering lot—but they do say they can paint. Me? I have never been

there—and do not want to go, either—there are no canals there. To be sure, they print books in Nuremberg. It was up there somewhere that they invented type, a lazy scheme to do away with writing. They are a thrifty lot—those Germans—they give me my fare and a penny more, just a single penny, and no matter how much I have talked and pointed out the wonderful sights, and imparted useful information, known to me alone—only one penny extra—think of it.

¶ Yes, printing was first done at Mayence by a German, Gutenberg, about sixty years ago. One of Gutenberg's workmen went up to Nuremberg and taught others how to design and cast type. This man Alberto Durer helped them, designing the initials and making their title page by cutting the design on a wood block, then covering this block with ink, laying a sheet of paper upon it, placing it in a press, and then when the paper is lifted off it looks exactly like the original drawing. In fact most people could n't tell the difference, and here you can print thousands of them from the one block!

Gian Bellini makes drawings for title pages and initials for Aldus and Nicholas Jenson. Venice is the greatest printing place in the world, and yet the business began here only thirty years ago. The first book printed here was in 1469, by John of Speyer. There are nearly two hundred licensed printing presses here, and it takes usually four men to a press—two to set the type and get things ready, and two to run the press. This

does not count, of course, the men who write the books, and those who make the type and cut the blocks from which they print the pictures for illustrations. At first, you know the books they printed in Venice had no title pages, initials or illustrations. My father was a printer and he remembers when the first large initials were printed—before that the spaces were left blank and the books were sent out to the monasteries to be completed by hand.

Gian and Gentile had a good deal to do about cutting the first blocks for initials—they got the idea, I think, from Nuremberg. And now there are Dutchmen down here from Amsterdam learning how to print books, and paint pictures. Several of them are in Gian's studio, I hear—every once in a while I get them for a trip to the Lido or to Murano.

Gentile Bellini is his brother and looks very much like him. The Grand Turk at Constantinople came here once and saw Gian Bellini at work in the Great Hall. He had never seen a good picture before and was amazed. He wanted the Senate to sell Gian to him, thinking he was a slave. They humored the Pagan by hiring Gentile Bellini to go instead, loaning him out for two years, so to speak.

Gentile went, and the Sultan, who never allowed any one to stand before him, all having to grovel in the dirt, treated Gentile as an equal. Gentile even taught the old rogue to draw a little, and they say the painter had a key to every room in the palace, and was treated

like a prince. ¶ Well, they got along all right, until one day Gentile drew the picture of the head of John the Baptist on a charger.

"A man's head does n't look like that when it is cut off," said the Turk contemptuously. Gentile had forgotten that the Turk was on familiar ground.

"Perhaps the Light of the Sun knows more about painting than I do!" said Gentile, as he kept right on at his work.

"I may not know much about painting, but I 'm no fool in some other things I might name," was the reply ☙☙

The Sultan clapped his hands three times: two slaves appeared from opposite doors. One was a little ahead of the other, and as this one approached, the Sultan with a single swing of the snickersnee snipped off his head. This teaches us that obedience to our superiors is its own reward. But the lesson was wholly lost on Gentile Bellini, for he did not even remain to examine the severed head for art's sake. The thought that it might be his turn next was supreme, and he leaped through a window, taking the sash with him. Making his way to the docks he found a sailing vessel loading with fruit, bound for Venice. A small purse of gold made the matter easy—the captain of the boat secreted him, and in four days he was safely back in St. Mark's giving thanks to God for his deliverance.

No, I did n't say Gian was a rogue—I only told you what others say. I am only a poor gondolier, why

should I trouble myself about what great folks do? I simply tell you what I hear—it may be so, and it may not; God knows! There is that Pascale Salvini—he has a rival studio, and when that Genoese, Christoforo Colombo, was here and made his stopping place at Bellini's studio, Pascale told every one that Colombo was a lunatic, and Bellini another, for encouraging him to show his foolish maps and charts. Now, they do say that Colombo has discovered a new world, and Italians are feeling troubled in conscience because they did not fit him out with ships instead of forcing him to go to Spain.

No, I did n't say Bellini was a hypocrite,—Pascale's pupils say so, and once they followed him over to Murano—three barca loads and my gondola beside.

You see it was like this: Twice a week just after sundown, we used to see Gian Bellini untie his boat from the landing there behind the Doge's palace, turn the prow, and beat out for Murano, with no companion but that deaf old care-taker. Twice a week, Tuesdays and Fridays,—always at just the same hour, regardless of weather, we would see the old hunchback light the lamps, and in a few moments the Master would appear, tuck up his black robe, step in the boat, take the oar and away they would go. It was always to Murano, and always to the same landing—one of our gondoliers had followed several times, just out of curiosity.

Finally it came to the ears of Pascale that Gian took

this regular trip to Murano. "It is a rendezvous," said Pascale. "Worse than that, an orgy among those lace-makers and the rogues of the glass-works. Oh, to think that Gian should stoop to such things at his age—his pretended asceticism is but a mask—and at his age!" ❦❦

The Pascale students took it up, and once came in collision with that Tiziano of Cadore, who they say broke a boat-hook over the head of one of them who had spoken ill of the Master.

But this did not silence the talk, and one dark night, when the air was full of flying mist, one of Pascale's students came to me and told me that he wanted me to take a party over to Murano. The weather was so bad that I refused to go—the wind blew in gusts, sheet lightning filled the eastern sky, and all honest men, but poor belated gondoliers, had hied them home ❦❦

I refused to go.

Had I not seen Gian the painter go not half an hour before? Well, if he could go, others could too.

I refused to go—except for double fare.

He accepted and placed the double fare in silver in my palm. Then he gave a whistle and from behind the corners came trooping enough swashbuckler students to swamp my gondola. I let in just enough to fill the seats and pushed off, leaving several standing on the stone steps cursing me and everything and everybody.

As my good boat slid away into the fog and headed on our course, I glanced back and saw the three barca loads following in my wake.

There was much muffled talk, and orders from some one in charge to keep silence. But there was passing of strong drink, and then talk, and from it I gathered that these were all students from Pascale's, out on one of those student carousals, intent on heaven knows what! It was none of my business.

We shipped considerable water, and several of the students were down on their knees praying and bailing, bailing and praying.

At last we reached the Murano landing. All got out, the barcas tied up, and I tied up, too, determined to see what was doing. The strong drink was passed, and a low heavy-set fellow who seemed to be captain charged all not to speak, but to follow him and do as he did.

We took a side street where there was little travel and followed through the dark and dripping way, fully a half mile, down there in that end of the island called the sailors' broglio, where they say no man's life is safe if he has a silver coin or two. There was much music in the wine shops and shouts of mirth and dancing feet on stone floors, but the rain had driven every one from the streets.

We came to a long low stone building that used to be a theatre, but was now a dance hall upstairs and a warehouse below. There were lights upstairs and

sounds of music. The stairway was dark, but we felt our way up and on tiptoe advanced to the big double door, from under which the light streamed.

We had received our orders, and when we got to the landing we stood there just an instant. "Now we have him—Gian the hypocrite!" whispered the stout man in a hoarse breath. We burst in the doors with a whoop and a bang. The change from the dark to the light sort of blinded us at first. We all supposed that there was a dance in progress of course, and the screams from women were just what we expected, but when we saw several overturned easels and an old man, half nude, and too scared to move, seated on a model throne, we did not advance into the hall as we intended. That one yell we gave was all the noise we made. We stood there in a bunch, just inside the door, sort of dazed and uncertain. We did not know whether to retreat, or charge on through the hall as we had intended. We just stood there like a lot of driveling fools ✱✱✱

"Keep right at your work, my good people. Keep right at your work!" called a pleasant voice. "I see we have some visitors."

And Gian Bellini came forward. His robe was still tucked up under the blue sash, but he had laid aside his black cap, and his tumbled gray hair looked like the aureole of a saint. "Keep right at your work," he said again, and then came forward and bade us welcome and begged us to have seats.

I dared not run away, so I sat down on one of the long seats that were ranged around the wall. My companions did the same. There must have been fifty easels, all ranged in a semi-circle around the old man who posed as a model. Several of the easels had been upset, and there was much confusion when we entered.

¶ "Just help us to arrange things—that is right, thank you," said Gian to the stout man who was captain of our party. To my astonishment the stout man was doing just as he was bid, and was pacifying the women students and straightening up their easels and stools.

¶ I was interested in watching Gian walking around, helping this one with a stroke of his crayon, saying a word to that, smiling and nodding to another. I just sat there and stared. These students were not regular art students, I could see that plainly. Some were children, ragged and bare-legged, others were old men who worked in the glass factories, and surely with hands too old and stiff to ever paint well. Still others were young girls and women of the town. I rubbed my eyes and tried to make it out!

The music we heard I could still hear—it came from the wine shop across the way. I looked around and what do you believe? My companions had all gone. They had sneaked out one by one and left me alone.

¶ I watched my chance and when the Master's back was turned I tiptoed out, too.

When I got down on the street I found I had left my cap, but I dare not go back after it. I made my way

down to the landing, half running, and when I got there not a boat was to be seen—the three barcas and my gondola were gone.

I thought I could see them, out through the mist, a quarter of a mile away. I called aloud, but no answer came back but the hissing wind. I was in despair—they were stealing my boat, and if they did not steal it, it would surely be wrecked—my all, my precious boat!

I cried and wrung my hands. I prayed! And the howling winds only ran shrieking and laughing around the corners of the building.

I saw a glimmering light down the beach at a little landing. I ran to it, hoping some gondolier might be found who would row me over to the city. There was one boat at the landing and in it a hunchback, sound asleep, covered by a canvas. It was Gian Bellini's boat. I shook the hunchback into wakefulness and begged him to row me across to the city. I yelled into his deaf ears, but he pretended not to understand me. Then I showed him the silver coin—the double fare, and tried to place it in his hand. But no, he only shook his head

I ran up the beach, still looking for a boat.

An hour had passed.

I got back to the landing just as Gian came down to his boat. I approached him and explained that I was a poor worker in the glass factory, who had to work all day and half the night, and as I lived over in the

city and my wife was dying, I must get home. Would he allow me to ride with His Highness? "Certainly—with pleasure, with pleasure!" he answered, and then pulling something from under his sash he said, "Is this your cap, signor?" I took my cap, but my tongue was paralyzed for the moment so I could not thank him

We stepped into the boat, and as my offer to row was declined, I just threw myself down by the hunchback, and the prow swung around and headed toward the city

The wind had died down, the rain had ceased, and from between the blue-black clouds the moon shone out. Gian rowed with a strong, fine stroke, singing a "Te Deum Laudamus" softly to himself the while.

I lay there and wept, thinking of my boat, my all, my precious boat!

We reached the landing—and there was my boat, safely tied up, not a cushion nor cord missing.

Gian Bellini? He may be a rogue as Pascale says—God knows! How can I tell—I am only a poor Gondolier.

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